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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1277
INFO RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHTN/AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN PRIORITY 7589
RUEH DU/AMCONSUL DURBAN PRIORITY 1653
RUEHJO/AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG PRIORITY 9942

UNCLAS PRETORIA 000339

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

OES/ENRC FOR LLOYD GAMBLE; AF/S FOR SUSAN WALKE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [AORC](#) [CITES](#) [KSCA](#) [UNEP](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA'S RESPONSE TO U.S. CITES PROPOSALS

REF: STATE 06668

1. (U) Environment, Science and Technology Officer delivered reftel points on U.S. CITES proposals to Elise Haber, Deputy Director for Conservation in the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) and Sonja Meintjes, Deputy Director for Biodiversity Compliance in the Department of Water and Environmental Affairs (DWEA) on February 3. EST Officer and SAG officials discussed each of the U.S. proposals and the SAG followed up with written responses to U.S. questions, summarized below. Please note that the South African responses are not final official positions; they are preliminary views on the U.S. proposals.

2. (U) TEXT OF SOUTH AFRICAN RESPONSE

-- Sharks. South Africa recognizes that the over exploitation of some marine species for commercial fisheries is becoming a serious problem; however sharks are protected in South African waters under the Marine Living Resources Act which prohibits the commercial fishing of sharks. South Africa is sympathetic to the U.S. proposals, however we are concerned that the proposal as it stands contains elements that should be dealt with by the various fisheries bodies of the FAO and that U.S. concerns are not necessarily trade issues that would fall under CITES.

-- Corals. South Africa acknowledges that international trade in pink and red corals could eventually have a negative impact on the survival of the species in the wild if the trade is not properly monitored. South Africa is sympathetic toward this proposal and will base its decision on the information supplied in the proposal.

-- Transfer of Polar Bear from CITES Appendix II to Appendix I. South Africa believes that the polar bear does not meet the biological criteria for inclusion in Appendix I. South Africa supports the principle of sustainable use of natural resources as is practiced in Canada where aboriginal people are allowed to benefit from the sustainable trade in polar bears. An Appendix I listing might affect this sustainable trade negatively, and this will have a negative impact on the livelihoods of the aboriginal people. South Africa shares the concerns of the U.S. regarding the shrinkage of polar bear habitat, but we are not convinced that this contributes to an increase in international trade in polar bear products.

-- Deletion of Bobcat from Appendix II. South Africa has previously supported the U.S. proposal on the bobcat (at COP-14), but the proposal was not accepted by the Parties due to the identification and look-alike problem of skins in trade. South Africa notes that the U.S. has worked on the identification issue and will most likely support the

proposal to delete the bobcat from CITES Appendix II.

-- Snake Trade and Conservation Management. South Africa will support the U.S. proposal for a snake trade workshop especially since the workshop will be sponsored by the U.S. and will thus not have financial implications for the Secretariat.

END TEXT OF SOUTH AFRICAN RESPONSE.

13. (U) The South African delegation to CITES COP-15 has not been finalized and is currently pending ministerial approval. Confirmed delegation members at this time include Ms. Sonja Meintjes of DWEA/CITES Management Authority (smeintjes@deat.gov.za) and Ms. Elise Haber of DIRCO (habere@foreign.gov.za).

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